

Notice of Allowability

Application No.

09/976,259

Examiner

Igor Borissov

Applicant(s)

KUROKAWA ET AL.

Art Unit

3639

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address--

All claims being allowable, PROSECUTION ON THE MERITS IS (OR REMAINS) CLOSED in this application. If not included herewith (or previously mailed), a Notice of Allowance (PTOL-85) or other appropriate communication will be mailed in due course. **THIS NOTICE OF ALLOWABILITY IS NOT A GRANT OF PATENT RIGHTS.** This application is subject to withdrawal from issue at the initiative of the Office or upon petition by the applicant. See 37 CFR 1.313 and MPEP 1308.

1. ☒ This communication is responsive to Request for Continued Examination (RCE) 8/02/2006.
2. ☒ The allowed claim(s) is/are 1-3,5-15 and 17-19.
3. ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☒ All b) ☐ Some* c) ☐ None of the:
1. ☒ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this national stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* Certified copies not received: _____.


Applicant has THREE MONTHS FROM THE "MAILING DATE" of this communication to file a reply complying with the requirements noted below. Failure to timely comply will result in ABANDONMENT of this application.

THIS THREE-MONTH PERIOD IS NOT EXTENDABLE.

4. ☐ A SUBSTITUTE OATH OR DECLARATION must be submitted. Note the attached EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT or NOTICE OF INFORMAL PATENT APPLICATION (PTO-152) which gives reason(s) why the oath or declaration is deficient.
5. ☐ CORRECTED DRAWINGS (as "replacement sheets") must be submitted.
- (a) ☐ including changes required by the Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) attached
- 1) ☐ hereto or 2) ☐ to Paper No./Mail Date _____.
- (b) ☐ including changes required by the attached Examiner's Amendment / Comment or in the Office action of Paper No./Mail Date _____.
- Identifying indicia such as the application number (see 37 CFR 1.84(c)) should be written on the drawings in the front (not the back) of each sheet. Replacement sheet(s) should be labeled as such in the header according to 37 CFR 1.121(d).
6. ☐ DEPOSIT OF and/or INFORMATION about the deposit of BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL must be submitted. Note the attached Examiner's comment regarding REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEPOSIT OF BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL.

Attachment(s)

1. ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2. ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
3. ☒ Information Disclosure Statements (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08), Paper No./Mail Date _____
4. ☐ Examiner's Comment Regarding Requirement for Deposit of Biological Material
5. ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
6. ☒ Interview Summary (PTO-413), Paper No./Mail Date _____
7. ☒ Examiner's Amendment/Comment
8. ☒ Examiner's Statement of Reasons for Allowance
9. ☐ Other _____


IGOR N. BORISSOV
PRIMARY EXAMINER

DETAILED ACTION

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on 8/02/2006 has been entered.

Response to Amendment

Amendment received on 4/21/2006 is acknowledged and entered. Claims 1, 4, and 14 have been amended. Claims 1-19 are currently pending in the application.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

Claim Rejections under 35 USC § 103 have been withdrawn due to the applicant's amendment.

EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT

An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR 1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it **MUST** be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee.

Authorization for this examiner's amendment was given in a telephone interview with an applicant's representative Richard J. Katz (Reg. No.: 47,698) on Thursday 17, 2006.

The application has been amended as follows:

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) An electricity generation equipment management system comprising:

at least one generator unit, operated by an electricity provider, supplying electricity to at least one specific electricity consumer;

a service company maintaining and managing operation of said at least one generator unit;

a management center, monitoring an operation status of said at least one generator unit and monitoring an amount of electricity supplied to said at least one specific electricity consumer by said at least one generator unit;

a database including a relationship data record indicating information regarding an association between the generator unit and a specific service company, and configured to store and manage information collected at the at least one generator unit, the information selected from ~~the group comprising~~ at least one of detection information, generator unit specification information, maintenance information, and service company information;

the management center being operable configured to access the database information so as to provide unified management over the information, and further configured to select the specific service company to receive instructions based on the association in the relationship data record;

a system for communicating information between said management center and said electricity provider; and

an Internet virtual financial institution that supports transactions that bill an electricity supply service fee to each of said at least one specific electricity consumer based on information received from said management center.

4. (Canceled)

5. (Currently Amended) The electricity generation equipment management system as described in claim [[4]]1 wherein:

said at least one generator unit is a fuel cell electricity generating device;

said service company includes a fuel supply company and a maintenance/management company;

said fuel supply company supplying fuel to said fuel cell electricity generating device; and

said maintenance/management company performing maintenance on said fuel cell electricity generating device and responding to irregularities in said fuel cell electricity generating device.

7. (Currently Amended) The electricity generation equipment management system as described in claim [[4]]1 wherein said at least one generator unit is used locally by said at least one specific electricity consumer as a home generator system.

10. (Currently Amended) The electricity generation equipment management system as described in claim [[4]]1 wherein:

said at least one generator unit is installed for said at least one specific electricity consumer in a region where laying and maintaining electrical cable from said electricity provider is difficult; and

said management center uses wireless communication equipment to collect information from said generator unit regarding operation status of said at least one generator unit and regarding an amount of electricity supplied to said at least one specific electricity consumer.

12. (Currently Amended) An electricity generation equipment management system comprising:

at least one locally installed fuel cell electricity generating device supplying electricity to at least one specific electricity consumer;

a management center monitoring an operation status of said at least one fuel cell electricity generating device via a predetermined network;

a service company maintaining and operating said fuel cell electricity generating device based on instructions received from said management center;

a database including a relationship data record indicating information regarding an association between the fuel cell electricity generating device and a specific service company, and configured to store ~~for storing~~ information about irregularities issued from said at least one fuel cell electricity generating device in association with information relating to said specific service company corresponding to said irregularity information;

means for selecting the specific service company to receive instructions based on the association in the relationship data record;

means for notifying said specific service company associated with said irregularity by looking up said database upon detection of an irregularity in said at least one fuel cell electricity generating device; and

an Internet virtual financial institution that supports transactions that bill each of said at least one specific electricity consumer a maintenance and operating service fee based on information stored in said database.

14. (Currently Amended) An electricity management system, comprising:
generating means for generating electricity;

said generating means being local to a specific electricity consumer, whereby power cables from an electricity provider to said specific electricity consumer are unnecessary;

monitoring means for remotely monitoring said generating means;

Art Unit: 3639

a storage means including a relationship data record indicating an association between the generating means and a specific service company, and configured to store and manage information collected at the ~~at least one generator unit~~ generating means, the information selected from ~~the group comprising at least one of~~ detection information, generator unit specification information, maintenance information, and service company information;

the management center ~~being operable~~ configured to access the ~~database~~ storage means information so as to provide unified management over the information, and further configured to select the specific service company to receive instructions based on the association in the relationship data record; and

billing means for charging said specific electricity consumer for a consumed amount of said electricity, the billing means including an Internet virtual financial institution.

15. (Currently Amended) The electricity management system as described in claim 14, wherein the further comprising a management center is further configured to receive for receiving data from said monitoring means.

16. (Canceled)

17. (Currently Amended) The electricity management system as described in claim ~~[[16]]~~14 wherein:

said generating means includes a fuel cell electricity generating device;

said service company includes a fuel supply company and a maintenance/management company;

said fuel supply company supplying fuel to said fuel cell electricity generating device; and

said maintenance/management company performing maintenance on said fuel cell electricity generating device and responding to irregularities in said fuel cell electricity generating device.

Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 1-3, 5-15 and 17-19 are allowed.

The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance:

As per independent Claims 1 and 14, the best prior art Thompson et al. (US 5,973,481) in view of Budike, Jr. (US 6,311,105) and further in view of Sharma (US 2004/0167853) teaches a system for distributed electrical power generating stations, comprising: at least one generator unit, operated by an electricity provider, supplying electricity to at least one specific electricity consumer in a remote area; a management center for monitoring information (database) related to generation of energy, said information including an operation status of said at least one generator unit and monitoring an amount of electricity supplied to said at least one specific electricity consumer by said at least one generator unit; a system for communicating information between said management center and said electricity provider; said management center uses wireless communication means to collect information from said at least one generator unit regarding operation status of said at least one generator unit and operating parameters; a service company maintaining and managing operation of said at least one generator unit, wherein said service company receives instructions from said management center; Internet wireless communication means for transmitting billing and payment data for electricity supplied; and an Internet virtual financial institution that supports utility bills transactions.

However, Thompson et al. in view of Budike, Jr. and further in view of Sharma fails to disclose that said management center is configured to maintain information (database) indicating an association between the generator unit and a specific service company; and that said service company is selected by said management center as the specific service company based on said information in said database, and that said selected specific service company is configured to receive instructions based on said

information (database) indicating an association between the generator unit and a specific service company.

As per independent Claim 12 the best prior art Thompson et al. in view of Budike, Jr. further in view of Sharma and further in view of Fleckner et al. (US 6,589,682) teaches a system for distributed electrical power generating stations, comprising: at least one fuel cell generator unit operated by an electricity provider, supplying electricity to at least one specific electricity consumer in a remote area; a management center for monitoring information (database) related to generation of energy, said information including an operation status of said at least one generator unit and monitoring an amount of electricity supplied to said at least one specific electricity consumer by said at least one generator unit; a system for communicating information between said management center and said electricity provider; said management center uses wireless communication means to collect information from said at least one generator unit regarding operation status of said at least one generator unit and operating parameters; a service company maintaining and managing operation of said at least one generator unit, wherein said service company receives instructions from said management center; Internet wireless communication means for transmitting billing and payment data for electricity supplied; and an Internet virtual financial institution that supports utility bills transactions.

However, Thompson et al. in view of Budike, Jr. further in view of Sharma and further in view of Fleckner et al. fails to disclose that said management center is configured to maintain information (database) indicating an association between the generator unit and a specific service company; and that said service company is selected by said management center as the specific service company based on said information in said database, and that said selected specific service company is configured to receive instructions based on said information (database) indicating an association between the generator unit and a specific service company.

The best foreign art, Ehlers et al. teaches an energy management and building automation system configured to monitor energy supply and load performance, wherein said monitoring is conducted over the Internet.

However, Ehlers et al. fails to disclose that said system is configured to maintain information (database) indicating an association between an electricity generating device and a specific service company; and that said service company is selected as the specific service company based on said information in said database, and that said selected specific service company is configured to receive instructions based on said information (database) indicating an association between the generator unit and a specific service company.

The best non-patent literature, Aiken et al. (Energy Utilities in the Internet and NII: Users of Providers?) teaches various aspects of energy generation and delivery, and billing for energy consumed, including monitoring of energy-related activity over the Internet.

However, Aiken et al. fails to disclose providing a database containing information indicating an association between an electricity generating device and a specific service company; and selecting a service company based on said information in said database, and providing instructions to said service company based on said information (database) indicating an association between the generator unit and a specific service company.

The remaining dependent Claims are considered allowable, as they are dependent and based off of an allowable independent Claims.

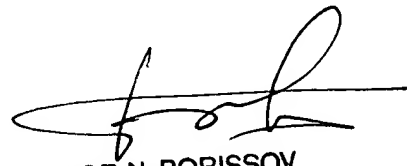
Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Igor Borissov whose telephone number is 571-272-6801. If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, John Hayes can be reached on 571-272-6708. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

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